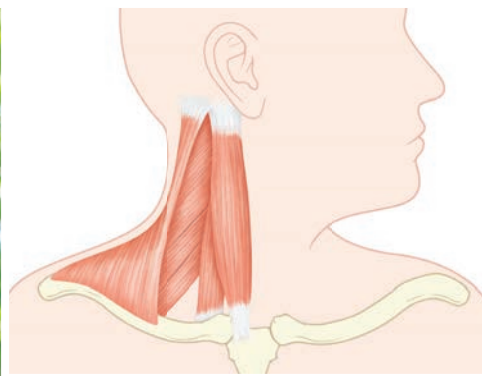


# THE FIT NECK WORKOUT



Neck Exercises to Stretch and Strengthen

# Build Your Neck Power

Is your neck tight, sore, or painful? Do you want to strengthen your neck muscles and feel better? A fit neck workout can help. Your healthcare provider can tailor an exercise program to your fitness needs. The workout takes only a few minutes each day. So start now. Work out those neck muscles at your desk, at home—any time at all.

## Doing the Workout

Stretching and strengthening exercises can help ease your pain and build neck power and stability. For best results, remember to:

- Do the exercises every day, or as instructed.
- Go through each exercise slowly, without bouncing. Breathe normally.
- Avoid stretching your neck too far in any direction. Stay within a range that is comfortable for you.
- Stop any exercise if you feel tingling, sharp pain, numbness, or dizziness.



## NOTES

These exercises are safe for most people. Your healthcare provider may add special instructions to fit your needs. Some exercises have more challenging variations. Ask your healthcare provider before trying these. For each exercise, check the NOTES box for tips to help you exercise safely.

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## Staying Posture-Perfect

While using good posture may not be a workout, it is vital for a healthy neck. Proper posture keeps your neck and the rest of your spine in line. This is important whether you're standing, sitting, or lying down. To maintain proper posture:

- **Always keep your ears aligned** over your shoulders and hips. Don't slouch.
- **Keep your chin level** and tucked in slightly to avoid putting stress on your neck and shoulder muscles.
- **When sitting, keep your feet on the ground.** This helps your head and spine stay aligned. Also, support your lower back by sitting firmly against the back of the chair. If you need more support, place a towel roll or lumbar roll behind your lower back.
- **When lying on your back or side, support your neck** so that your head doesn't drop down.

▶▶ **Make it a habit to check your posture.**

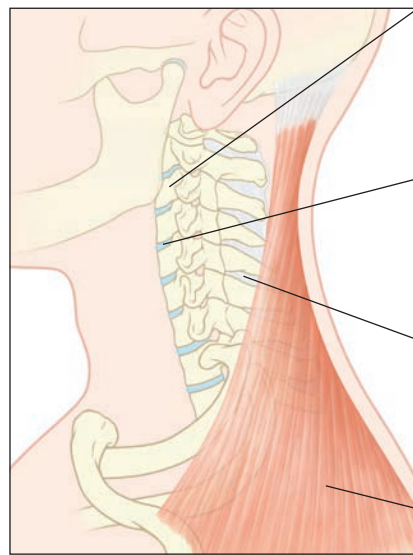


# Your Neck in Motion

**A healthy neck supports the head. It is also aligned with the spine. When the parts of the neck are in good condition, you can move your head easily without pain.**

## Strength and Support

A strong and flexible neck is important. That's because it has to support the weight of your head—about 9 pounds. The neck includes the top 7 bones (**vertebrae**) of the spine. These bones are aligned in a slight curve and move more than any other bones in the spine. Sturdy but flexible ligaments connect the vertebrae and help support your head.



**Vertebrae** are bones that stack like building blocks to form the spine.

**Disks** are soft pads of tissue that act as shock absorbers between the vertebrae.

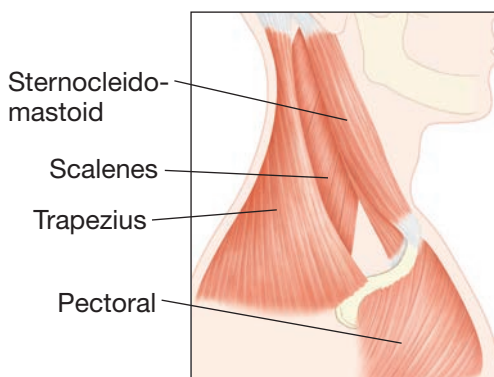
**Ligaments** are strong bands of tissue that connect the vertebrae.

**Muscles** support the neck and allow it to move.

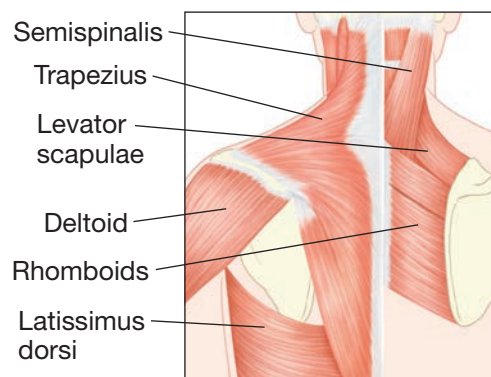
## Muscles at Work

Your neck muscles work with muscles in your shoulders, chest, and back. Keeping all these muscles strong helps support the bones, joints, and ligaments in your neck. If you don't exercise these muscles, they're likely to become stiff and weak.

**Side View**



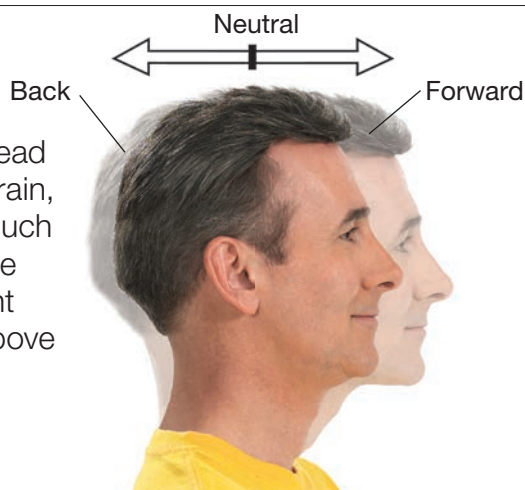
**Back View**





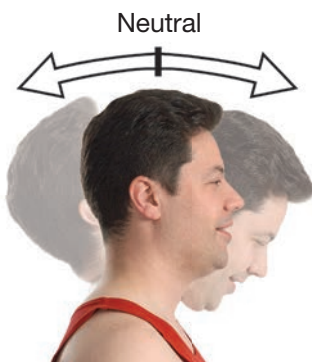
## Finding Your Neutral Position

Neck muscles can become sore when the head is not properly balanced. To prevent neck strain, keep your head in the **neutral position** as much as possible. To find this position, slowly move your head forward, then backward. The point where your head is comfortably balanced above your shoulders is your neutral position.



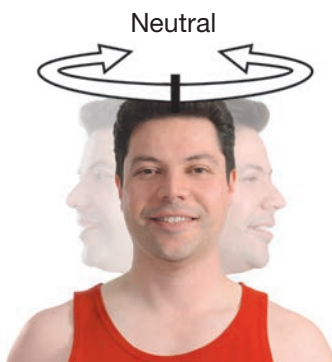
## Basic Neck Movements

The neck has 3 basic movements as shown below. Each movement has its own **range of motion**. This is the amount of movement that is possible under normal conditions. To avoid injury, stay within the range of motion that is comfortable for you.



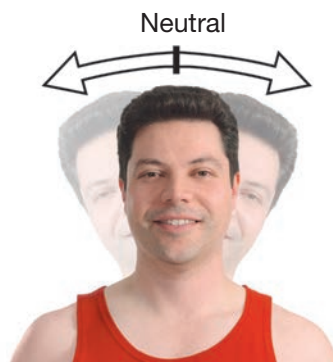
### Flexing and Extending

**Your neck flexes when you look down. It extends when you look up.**



### Rotating

**Your neck rotates when you turn it from side to side.**



### Side Bending

**Your neck side bends when you tilt your head toward your shoulder.**

## Working Out Your Neck

The exercises on the following pages help build strength and flexibility in your neck. Remember to start each exercise with your head in the neutral position. Also, use slow, steady movements. The more you practice, the better your neck will feel.

# Neck Rotation

This exercise stretches and relaxes neck muscles. It also improves flexibility for head-turning.



## HOW TO

**1** Lie on your back with your head in neutral position, your knees bent, and your feet flat on the floor. Place a rolled-up towel or neck roll under your neck. Use a lumbar roll for lower back support, if needed.

**2** Turn your head slowly to 1 side, keeping your chin level. Try to touch your chin to your shoulder. Hold for 10 seconds. Then turn your head to the other side. Repeat 5 times to each side. Be sure to bring your head back to neutral position between each turn.

## NOTES

- Don't force any motion.
- Move slowly and evenly.

## Special Instructions

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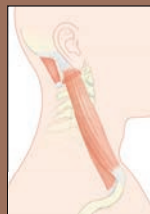


## Challenge Yourself

Rotate your legs and lower body in the opposite direction of your head and neck. Repeat 5 times in each direction.

# Face Clock

This exercise increases neck mobility for front-facing activities.



## HOW TO

**1** Lie on your back with your head in neutral position, your knees bent, and your feet flat on the floor. Place a rolled-up towel or neck roll under your neck.

**2** Imagine a clock face. With your nose, slowly trace the outer edge of the clock. Move clockwise first, then counterclockwise. Repeat 5 times in each direction.

## NOTES

- Move your neck slowly and smoothly.
- Stay in a comfortable range.



## Special Instructions

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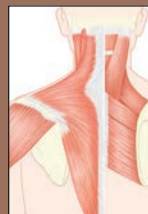
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## Challenge Yourself

At work, do this exercise on breaks, after lunch, and before going home. Sit up straight with your back supported firmly against your chair.

# Neck Flex

This exercise stretches muscles from the top of the neck to the shoulder blades.



## HOW TO

- 1** Sit up straight with your neck in neutral position. For support, rest your left forearm against your lower back. Put your right hand behind your head.
- 2** Gently push your head forward and down, keeping your chin tucked. Hold for 10 seconds. Return to neutral position and repeat 5 times.

## NOTES

- Don't push too hard on your head.



## Special Instructions

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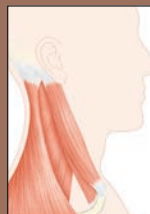
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# Side Bend

This exercise loosens neck and shoulder muscles that often tighten with stress.



## HOW TO

**1** Sit up straight with your neck in neutral position. Hold the edge of your chair with your right hand. Tuck your chin in slightly. Then tilt your head to the left, keeping your nose pointed straight ahead.

**2** Place your left hand on the upper right side of your head. Gently pull your head to the left. Hold for 10 seconds, then return to neutral position. Repeat 5 times. Switch sides and do this exercise 5 more times.

## NOTES

- Don't force your head.
- Use gentle pressure to increase the stretch.

## Special Instructions

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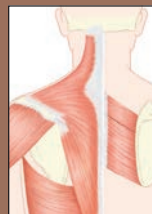


## Challenge Yourself

Tuck 1 end of a towel under your left arm. Then bring the other end over your right shoulder. Pull the towel down with both hands as you side bend your head to the left. Repeat with the other side.

# Reach and Pull

This exercise relieves tension between the shoulder blades and across the chest.



## HOW TO

**1** Reach forward with both arms parallel to the floor. Clasp your hands and lower your chin toward your chest. Round your shoulders, feeling the stretch between your shoulder blades. Hold for 10 seconds.

**2** Unclassp your hands and return your head to neutral position. Palms facing forward, bend your elbows and bring your forearms back until your palms are in line with your ears. Feel the stretch in your chest muscles. Return to starting position. Repeat both steps 5 times.

## NOTES

- Don't push your arms too far behind you.

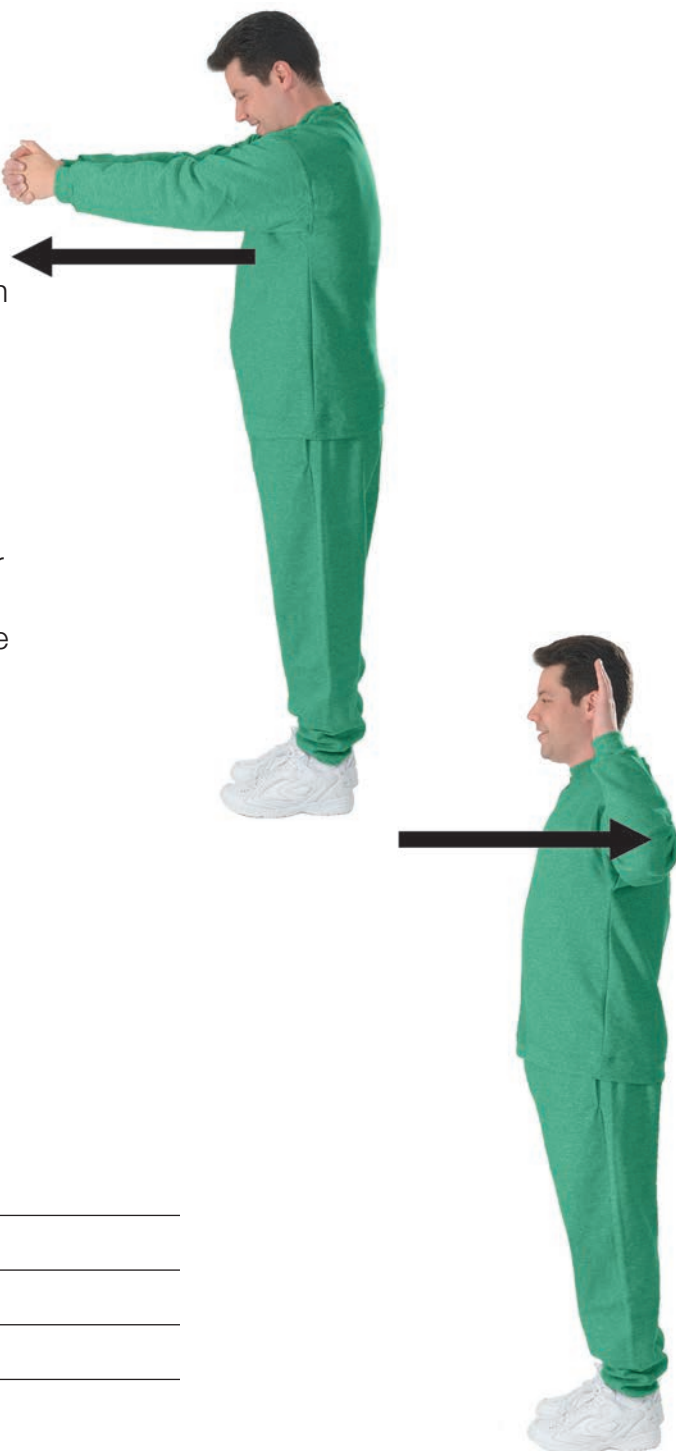
## Special Instructions

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# Shoulder Stretch

This exercise increases flexibility in the shoulders, chest, and upper back.



## HOW TO

- 1** With your head in neutral position, raise your arms to your sides until they're parallel with the floor. Bend your elbows and don't let them drop below shoulder height.
- 2** Turn palms forward and make relaxed fists. Pull your forearms together until they touch. Round your shoulders to feel the stretch between your shoulder blades. Hold for 10 seconds. Slowly return to the starting position. Repeat 5 times.
- 3** Bend your left arm in front of you and hold it with your right hand, just beside the elbow. Then, pull your left elbow across the front of your body. Hold for 10 seconds and switch sides. Repeat 5 times with each arm.

## NOTES

- Don't force the stretch.
- Use slow, steady movements.

## Special Instructions

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# Head Press

This exercise uses resistance to strengthen neck muscles.



## HOW TO

**1** Sit up straight with your head in neutral position. Place your right palm against your forehead. Push your head against your hand while resisting with your arm muscles so your head doesn't move. Hold for 10 seconds. Slowly relax the pressure. Repeat 5 times.



**2** Move your palm to the side of your head. Press 5 times. Repeat on the other side.



**3** Place your palm on the back of your head. Press and repeat 5 times.



## NOTES

- Don't press so hard that you cause pain or your head shakes.
- Don't let your head move in any direction.

## Special Instructions

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## Challenge Yourself

Place your palms on each side of your head. Rapidly press your head back and forth against each hand.



# Head Lifts

This exercise strengthens neck muscles and improves flexibility for frequent head-turning.



## HOW TO

**1** Lie on your back with your head in neutral position, knees bent, and feet flat on the floor. For support, place a neck roll or rolled-up towel under your neck. Tuck your chin and lift your head toward your chest, keeping your shoulders on the floor. Hold for 10 seconds. Repeat 5 times.



**2** Turn onto your right side. Place your right palm on your left shoulder. Lift your head slowly toward your left shoulder. Hold for 10 seconds. Repeat 5 times. Switch to your left side and repeat the exercise.



**3** Get on your hands and knees, looking down at the floor. Keeping your spine aligned, let your head slowly drop toward your chest. Tuck your chin, and hold for 10 seconds. Then lift your head until your neck is level with your back. Repeat 5 times.



## Special Instructions

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## NOTES

- When doing Step 3, avoid lifting your head higher than your shoulders.



# Arm Lifts

This exercise strengthens neck, shoulder, and back muscles. It also helps with lifting and reaching.



## HOW TO

**1** Keep your head in neutral position and stand with your back straight.

**2** Alternately raise 1 arm and push back with the other. Keep your arms straight and your shoulders down. Move in slow, smooth arcs. When you reach the end of your range of motion, hold for 10 seconds. Repeat 5 times.

## NOTES

- If you have shoulder pain, talk with your healthcare provider before trying this exercise.

## Special Instructions

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## Challenge Yourself

Press 1 hand against a wall while lifting the other. Then, repeat with the opposite hand against the wall.



# Reach and Hold

This exercise strengthens shoulder, neck, and back muscles. It also helps build endurance.



## HOW TO

- 1** Get on your hands and knees. Place your knees so they are directly in line with your hips. Then, put your head in the neutral position.
- 2** With palm down, raise your right arm straight ahead of you. Hold for 5 seconds, then lower your arm. Switch sides and repeat 3 times with each arm.
- 3** Repeat the exercise, lifting your arm out to the side. Raise each arm 3 times.
- 4** Repeat the exercise. With palm up, lift your arm to the back. Raise each arm 3 times.

## NOTES

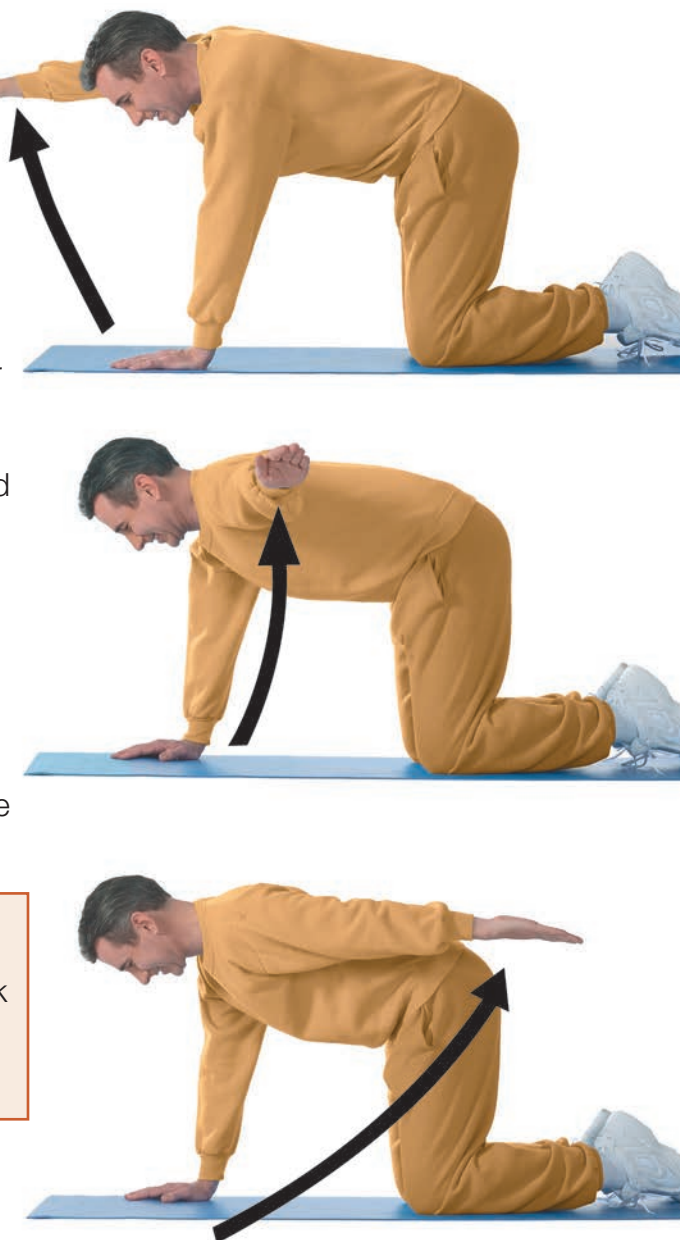
- If you have shoulder pain, talk with your healthcare provider before trying this exercise.

## Special Instructions

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# Chart Your Progress

You and your healthcare provider can work together to design a workout plan that fits your needs. Do your neck workout at home, at the office, or wherever you have time. All it takes is a few minutes a day to make a real difference in improving your neck pain. Check the upper half of the box each day you do a morning workout. Check the lower half if you exercise in the evening. And congratulate yourself for your good work!

		S	M	T	W	T	F	S
WK 1	AM							
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Talk to your healthcare provider about adding low-impact aerobic exercises, such as walking and swimming, to your fit neck workout.

Also available in Spanish

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